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10 **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ILLUMINATION WITH A PLURALITY OF
CANDLES**

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

15 This invention relates generally to a method and system for illumination using a
plurality of candles of a plurality of different sizes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

20 Candles are a popular source of background light for a variety of events such as
cocktail or dinner parties. But using candles to light an area suffers from several drawbacks.
First, because candles provide a relatively small amount of light several candles must be used
to adequately light a room. Using candles of the same size provides light for a period during
the burn time, then darkness when all of the candles burn out at approximately the same time.
Using candles of a variety of sizes, on the other hand, provides a varied amount of light as
candles burn out or new candles are lit over time. Depending on the size and number of
candles used, candles require continual attention to ensure the area is illuminated to the
25 desired level.

30 In addition, it is inconvenient to use candles to provide an intentionally varied amount
of light, for example as a dinner party progresses. It is often desirable to provide a
substantial amount of light at the start of a party, then dim the lighting somewhat when
dinner begins, then dim it further as dinner ends. Incandescent or other electrical sources of
light can be easily dimmed by adjusting a switch. Candles, however, must be blown out to

reduce the amount of lighting. Consumers are also not able to select a variety of candles of different sizes because they do not know how long particular candles are expected to burn, nor the number of candles required to properly illuminate an area at multiple lighting levels.

Further still, lighting a relatively large number of candles requires a lighter or several matches, which can be inconvenient.

Therefore, there is a need for a method and system of illumination with a plurality of candles that addresses some of the above problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprises an illumination system of at least two candles having different expected burn times.

In accordance with further aspects of the invention, the system comprises one or more additional candles having a third expected burn time.

In accordance with other aspects of the invention, the system comprises three pluralities of candles, each plurality of candles having different burn times.

In accordance with still further aspects of the invention, the burn times of the candles are designed to correspond to the timing of a dinner party or other event. Though the timing can be made to vary depending on the event, in one embodiment a first plurality of candles has a burn time of less than 60 minutes, a second plurality of candles has a burn time of between 60 and 120 minutes, and a third plurality of candles has a burn time of greater than 120 minutes. Consequently, lighting all of the candles at once will provide three different, timed illumination levels.

In accordance with yet other aspects of the invention, the candles are packaged together so that consumers will not have to guess at the number of candles, size, or timing required to produce the desired illumination. In an actual embodiment, the packaging comprises a sack having holes near the top to receive a fastener that will both close the package and retain a lighting element.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The preferred and alternative embodiments of the present invention are described in detail below with reference to the following drawings.

FIGURE 1 depicts an illumination system having a plurality of candles in accordance with the present invention.

FIGURE 2 depicts a container for packaging a plurality of candles in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIGURE 3 is a front view of a preferred closure system with a lighting element.

FIGURE 4 is a back view of a preferred closure system with a lighting element.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention provides a method and system of illumination with a plurality of candles. With reference to FIGURE 1, the illumination system 15 includes a plurality of candles with varying illumination durations or burn times. In an actual embodiment, the illumination system 15 comprises a plurality of candles of at least three different sizes 15a-c, with each of the three candle sizes having a different expected illumination time. By lighting each of the candles 15a-c at substantially the same time, an area will be relatively brightly illuminated upon lighting, progressively dimming as the candles burn out at three generally controlled times.

Though illustrated as generally cylindrical in shape, each of the candles 15a-c can be of any shape and can be floating or surface candles. Likewise, burn times can be established by variations in shape, wax composition, or other parameters other than candle size. Still further, the candles can be scented or unscented.

To illuminate the area, each of the candles is lit at substantially the same time. The candles can be ignited in succession, but preferably are lit without lengthy delays between lightings. As time progresses, the group of candles with the shortest burn time extinguishes first, leaving the remaining two groups of candles burning. The group having the next-shortest burn time will burn out next, leaving only the longest burn-time group lit and providing a dim lighting effect. Finally, the third group of candles will burn out.

In one embodiment, each of the candles in the first group of candles 15a has a burn time of about 60 minutes, the second group of candles has an expected burn time of between 60 and 120 minutes, and the third group is expected to burn at least 120 minutes. This timing is chosen to generally correspond to three phases of a dinner party, providing about an hour of brightest light during an arrival and mingling period, a somewhat dimmer period during dinner, and the dimmest period after dinner. While the number of candles of each size can be varied greatly depending on the brightness desired and the size of the area to be illuminated, an actual embodiment intended to light a typical room includes 12 candles of the smallest size 15a, six candles of the medium size 15b, and three candles of the largest size 15c.

Alternative embodiments of the illumination system employ greater or fewer pluralities of candles, depending on the desired effect. Thus, the system could include only two groups of candles each having different burn times, or could include four or more groups of candles, with each group having different burn times. In yet another embodiment, each of the candles has a different burn time. For example, the system may include twenty candles having burn times generally equally spaced over a three hour period. By lighting all of the

candles at about the same time, the illuminated area will progressively dim as the candles burn out in succession.

The candles 15a-c are preferably pre-packaged in a single container. While any container will suffice, the preferred container is illustrated in FIGURES 2-4. As is shown in
5 FIGURE 2, the packaging system includes a container 13 with a top end 40 and a bottom end 34, the top end 40 having a plurality of holes 32a-h, a front 36 and back 38, a left side 28 and right side 30, a lighting element 26, and a fastener 18. In an actual embodiment, the container 13 is a plastic bag, though cloth, vinyl, paper, or other materials may also be used.

The lighting element 26 is essentially a small elongated cylindrical candle. Because a
10 relatively large number of candles must be lit, a single match will burn out long before all of the candles can be lit. A preferred embodiment of the present invention therefore includes a lighting element that is expected to burn long enough to light all of the candles of the illumination system.

The fastener 18 is preferably a rubber band but may alternatively be string, twine, ribbon, or other materials capable of extending through the holes 32 to close the container 13.
15 The fastener 18 is threaded through each the holes 32a-h of the container 13 to secure the lighting element 26 to the container 13 and to close the top end 40 of the container 13. To secure the package, one end of the fastener 18 is threaded through each of the holes 32a-h in succession. After threading the fastener 18 through the holes, one end will remain extending
20 through the first hole 32a on the front side of the package 36 while the other end will extend through the second hole 32h on the front side of the package 36. If a rubber band is chosen as the fastener, the ends of the fastener will be in the form of small loops. To close the container, opposite ends of the lighting element are retained within the ends of the fastener, as best illustrated in FIGURES 3 and 4. If a twine or ribbon is used for the fastener, the two
25 ends are tied together and around the lighting element to seal the container. In yet another embodiment, the container has no holes at all and is taped, glued, stapled, or otherwise sealed. In such alternative embodiments, the lighting element is either placed inside the container or attached to the outside of the container.

FIGURES 3 and 4 illustrate front and back views of the packaging with the fastener and lighting element in place in accordance with the preferred embodiment. FIGURES 3
30 and 4 also depict a flap 42 extending over the top of the container 13 and retained by the fastener. The flap 42 can be either a separate section of material or an extension of the front 36 or back 38 of the container 13. The flap 42 includes a central fold and additional holes 36 to allow it to be fastened to the container 13 by the fastener 18. Accordingly, the flap further
35 seals the package and provides an area for labels or other indicia.

As yet another alternative embodiment the candles 15 may be packaged in a plurality of packages, with a separate container for each separate size of candles. Accordingly, if three distinct burn times are desired, three separate containers may be provided, each containing a plurality of candles having a single expected burn time.

5 Preferably, the candles 15a-c are floating candles that are placed in a receptacle of water prior to lighting. If the bowl is constructed from wax or other somewhat translucent materials, a stunning visual effect is created from the flickering glows of the candles. Although floating candles are preferred because of the additional visual effects from reflections from water and glow through the bowl, surface candles can also be used instead of
10 floating candles.

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, as noted above, many changes can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is not limited by the disclosure of the preferred embodiment. Instead, the invention should be determined entirely by reference to
15 the claims that follow.

FOOTNOTES